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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4662
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2465
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2330
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2910
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 3206
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000043

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: NEW SENIOR ADVISOR JOINS
PRESIDENTIAL APPARAT, BUT HIS ROLE REMAINS UNCLEAR

Classified By: Charge Richard M. Miles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: As in previous years, letters of congratulation on the new year from various Turkmenistan officials to the Turkmen president were published in the state-controlled press, including one from senior officials of the secretive Presidential Apparatus. Two letters from apparat officials appeared in the newspaper before and after the new year, highlighting what the government perceived as President Berdimuhamedov's greatest accomplishments. The list of signatories also revealed that the President had appointed a new senior advisor who may focus on Berdimuhamedov's colossal pet project, the Avaza Tourism Zone. With the addition of Guychgeldy Hojaberdiyev, three of the seven individuals who run the apparatus are now Berdimuhamedov's own appointees. The other four appear to have been running things in the President's office since independence. END SUMMARY.

LETTERS FROM APPARAT PRAISE BERDIMUHAMEDOV'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

12. (U) On December 24 and January 2, the newspaper "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" published congratulatory letters to President Berdimuhamedov from the officials who run the Presidential Apparatus. The December letter congratulated the President at length on the success of his recently adopted UN Resolution on energy transit reliability, noting "...your initiative has been recorded in the history of international relations and diplomacy in golden letters." The January letter was a flattering summary of the President's major accomplishments on behalf of Turkmenistan and the Turkmen people in 2008 as a first chapter in his "Epic of the New Revival." Achievements identified included infrastructure development, economic reform, foreign policy initiatives that advanced Turkmenistan's stature (while preserving neutrality and multi-lateral cooperation), his UN resolution on energy transit security, the revised Constitution, the successful conduct of the Mejlis elections "on a wide democratic basis," the harvest of over one million tons of cotton, publication of the president's first collected writings, "Toward New Heights of Progress," and "an overall improvement in living conditions for the people."

A NEW MEMBER OF THE INNER CIRCLE?

13. (C) The two letters also revealed that President Berdimuhamedov had quietly appointed a new advisor to the Presidential Apparatus. "G. Hojaberdiyev" joined the names of the other senior members of the Presidential Apparatus who signed the congratulatory letter. Post believes the new member is Guychgeldy Hojaberdiyev, the former Chairman of the State Committee on Tourism and Sport. Little information is available on Hojaberdiyev, although a decree published in January 2008 noted his "transfer to another post" from the committee chairmanship. There were no public references to him in 2008. In August 2006 he was moved from his post as Deputy Chairman of the State Committee on Tourism and Sport, and he became Rector of the National Institute of Sport and Tourism. In May 2007, Berdimuhamedov appointed him Chairman of the State Committee on Tourism and Sport. His meteoric rise from obscurity may be related to the committee's connection to the expansive Avaza National Tourist Zone project. In July 2007, a presidential decree put Hojaberdiyev's committee at the center of oversight for the long-term implementation of Avaza, requiring him to work closely with Deputy Cabinet Chairman Saparliyev, numerous financial and construction ministries and agencies. The decree also empowered Hojaberdiyev's committee to "examine" investment projects for Avaza.

14. (C) Prior to this, only two of the six individuals who operate almost entirely in the shadows were Berdimuhamedov's appointees, Yusup Ishangulyev, identified as Chief of the Presidential Administration, whom the new President brought with him from the Ministry of Health, and Kakageldy

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Charyardurdyev, the Presidential Press Secretary who came from the Ministry of Culture. The other four are holdovers from the Niyazov period, and very little is known about who they are and what their responsibilities are within the Apparatus. Victor Hramov served Niyazov from the late 1980s on, and according to Russian press reports controlled all access to Niyazov, monitored international press and oversaw state censorship. Yklymberdy Paromov served Niyazov in a variety of high level positions from 1995 until Niyazov died, including in the MNB, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Presidential Apparatus, the MFA and the Textile Ministry. Alexander Jadan was said to have been Niyazov's personal valet. Nothing is known about Victor Umnov, although Russian press reported that he and Victor Hramov jointly engineered Berdimuhamedov's rise to power.

15. (C) COMMENT: If Post's information is correct, and Hojaberdiyev is handling Avaza, his elevation to a senior position within the Presidential Apparatus underscores the priority that the President places on the completion of the project. Post will try to gather more information about Hojaberdiyev's appointment. END COMMENT.

MILES